

Memorial Service for Dr. Eric T. Carlson **February 26, 1992.**

Dr. William A. Frosch **Interim Chairman, Department of Psychiatry**

I would like to thank the College and the Hospital for making these facilities available to us. Unfortunately Dr. Michels, our Dean and for many years Chairman of the Department, is out of town but he sent me the following letter.

Dr. Robert Michels **Dean, Cornell University Medical College**

"I regret that I will not be with you in person at the memorial service for Ted Carlson. I will be there in spirit. It seems most appropriate to have it on a Wednesday afternoon at the same time and only a few yards from the place where he presided at so many meetings of the History Section. One of the most pleasant rewards of my office was to have Ted reserve a seat for me near the head of the table when I was a few minutes late, and then make me feel that I was pleasing him by my interest. It was much the same when he would ask to see me about some administrative matter, and always inquired about my concerns and needs, apologizing for burdening me with his. I will never forget his extraordinary personal generosity in arranging the gift I received from the department last year, and then taking the time to acquaint me with its history.

Last week we spoke of him at the meeting of the American College [of Psychiatrists] which Jean and he attended so regularly. I cannot think of anything I might say more fitting for so passionate a historian - we will always remember him."

Dr. William A. Frosch

I would like to echo those words both in my former role and my present role. Ted Carlson was one of those rare people who was willing to answer questions. What was striking was that you'd ask him a question and he'd say "I really don't know anything about that," and then three days later he would come back to you saying "I found this interesting volume and you might also talk to so and so - he knows something about it also - and I've checked and they are willing to talk to you" and so on. In a way Ted represents such a large portion of the department's own history. He came to

the medical school in 1946 and has been here since. I have his personnel folder here which includes things in Dr. Diethelm's handwriting, Dr. Michel's handwriting, and a few in my own. I don't want to take too long, just to say that recently I ran across a quotation applied to somebody very different, which struck me as being most apropos for Ted. It was Abigail Adams, the Vice-President's wife, talking about George Washington. She described him as "polite with dignity, affable without familiarity, modest, wise and good." I think that is a description of the Ted we knew. Thank you.

Dr. Norman Dain

I met Ted in 1958 when, as a doctoral student, I came to work as his research assistant. This was something of an adventure for both of us, for the history of psychiatry was then a largely unexplored field. Ted knew little about history and I was no better off when it came to psychiatry. Together we made quite a team.

But it became obvious that Ted was not destined to be a full-time researcher, although his output as a part-time one was substantial indeed. Not only did he have his psychiatric practice and medical school responsibilities, but Ted, a born collector, had a library to build. On the foundation laid by Dr. Oskar Diethelm, his friend and mentor, Ted developed the best library extant today devoted to the history of psychiatry. On Ted's initiative the library became the center around which scholars interested in the history of psychiatry congregated to discuss their work. Thus was the Section on the History of Psychiatry born. Of necessity Ted became an administrator and by inclination an impresario. The Section became a unique institution. There was and is nothing like it anywhere else in the world--an interdisciplinary gathering of scholars interested in the history of psychiatry. Ted, and the Section, served as mentor to graduate students in history, medical students, and research scholars from near and far working in related fields, including visitors from abroad. The Section has also sponsored meetings, seminars and other activities; and out of its work came many scholarly books and papers. In his urge to expand outward he proposed that we start a newsletter dealing with research in the history of behavioral science. In a few years the newsletter was transformed into the *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, still going strong--in Boston.

What made all of this and much more possible was Ted's vision. His ideal was a community of scholars and he was able to realize that ideal. His passion, and I use the word advisedly, for scholarship was not parochial or self centered. He could therefore attract scholars outside the medical profession over whom he had no authority and little more to offer than a congenial place to work, and a group of like-minded scholars. And many of these scholars became long term members of the Section because with Ted in

charge they could be assured of considerate, fair treatment and enthusiastic support. In his unpretentious, kind and astute way Ted orchestrated all aspects of the Section, but he was always open to suggestions and never dogmatic. He was able to delegate authority and inclined to give people their head. And he was not overly impressed by status. If he could do valuable research so could others.

The Section's limited financial resources forced Ted to devote more and more of his time to its needs, so that its success was bought in part with his increased personal workload. The Section ran exclusively on soft money, often raised personally by Ted—an almost unbelievable accomplishment. I would not wish to create the impression that Ted did not have help and support from others. He did, but to no small degree that help came because people felt affection for him and admired his ability to do the seemingly impossible. But, he never forgot that the Section's success depended upon the scholars that made up its membership, and it was his efforts in their behalf that distinguished Ted as Chief.

A few personal comments—which I believe will reveal something not only of my personal relations with Ted but also his generosity of spirit. Soon after I first came to work for him Ted sought a grant from the Social Science Research Council, and finding that they would not be inclined to fund an organization like the Section he told them of my research. The upshot was that I received the grant. Subsequently I would accidentally or in passing learn that Ted had interceded in my behalf in many different ways. I suspect that many of the times people have asked me to do something or awarded me some honor the initiative came from Ted. Some he told me about, others not. In the early days we went to many conventions to deliver joint papers and in every instance he always dragged me along when he would meet his friends, albeit I was low man on the totem pole. We, along with Jean, ate strawberry shortcake in season in Philadelphia, visited museums in Chicago, and everywhere haunted the bookstores for possible additions to what became known as the Oskar Diethelm Historical Library.

Ted and Jean were helpful and kind to me and my family in all sorts of ways. He was uncommonly sensitive to people's feelings and needs, and while there were some people he did not like, he never made a big thing about it; hate or anger was not his style, though he could be firm when he had to be. He was tolerant and compassionate—a lovable and loving man.

When George Mora heard of Ted's death he said "But he was my best friend." I can only echo George's words. Ted was also my best friend.

Dr. John C. Burnham

[Following is a letter from Dr. John C. Burnham, Professor of History and Psychiatry at Ohio State University, President of the American Association for the History of Medicine, a long time colleague and friend of Ted's, read by Dr. George Makari.]

"Only extraordinary circumstances keep me from being present to share with you memories and appreciation of Ted Carlson.

I knew Ted almost from the beginning of my serious interest in the history of psychiatry and visited him in his office when he was not far into it, either. Over the years, I watched with admiration the way in which he cultivated both people and institutional apparatus to further the study and understanding of the history of psychiatry. The record of the young and old alike who for almost half a century benefitted from Ted's encouragement is astonishing. And, beyond the library, the Section as an institution fostered and continues to foster activities that have significantly helped make psychiatry the specialty with the best modern historical account. Moreover, Ted's influence was not merely to be measured by the numbers of people whom he affected. The quality of the work in the field is infinitely better because of his subtle suggestions, influence, and creative programming.

The nature of the man was such that my most important memories are not of incidents but rather of situations and of customary patterns of behavior. He and I interacted most regularly at meetings of the American Association for the History of Medicine, on which occasions there would be a "Carlson Dinner" one night where historians of psychiatry would get together and share research tips, experiences, approaches, and enthusiasms. Ted was charmingly modest about the occasion being informally named in his honor, and in many amusing and playful ways he denied any complicity in either convening or naming the event. But when it was clear that the event was going to materialize, Ted emerged as a natural, if low key, leader, inadvertently revealing his proper station among his colleagues.

It is rare for human beings to leave so great a mark on contemporaries and to leave behind as Ted did such lasting influence on so many people. With Ted it was never possible and still is not possible to separate the warm, fun person from the powerful scholarly influence and institutionally inspiring figure."

Dr. Jacques M. Quen

Thirty years is a long time, but for some friendships, it's just not long enough. Jean and Ted Carlson have been a special part of my life since 1961.

When I first met Ted, the Section was housed in two small rooms on the fourth floor in Payne Whitney. Then, he got us moved into the unused

old hydrotherapy quarters in the sub-basement. Finally, when we had to leave there, we moved to the abandoned animal lab on the roof.

I saw this gentle and modest man create a nationally unique environment for people who wanted to study the history of psychiatry. He did it with a remarkably unself-conscious dedication, asking only that at least once every two years we put down on paper, for the benefit of others, what we had learned. If ever there was a haven designed for reexamining where psychiatry had been and how we got here, it was in his History Section. I've yet to see an academic atmosphere more conducive to scholarship and learning, or one characterized by more generous, freely offered collegial interest and assistance than the one he fostered.

Frequently, I would come into the Section and find him moving furniture or piles of books around, trying to squeeze out just a little more space. Occasionally he would draft me to go with him to the sub-basement corridors of the main hospital to make a "midnight requisition" of discarded furniture or, to help him scrounge books from private or organizational libraries that were going to close.

Often, when I asked him where I could find some information, he would tell me, and then get up from his desk, or from the pile of books he'd been looking through, to check it with me, because typically, he, too, was curious about the answer.

The Section, the Department, and the Center were his priorities, but he contributed much personal time and effort to outside professional and public service. He was a founding member of CHEIRON: the International Society for the History of the Behavioral and Social Sciences, and served on various committees of the New York Academy of Medicine, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Association for the History of Medicine, the American Psychoanalytic Association (although he was neither a member nor a psychoanalyst), and the World Psychiatric Association, among others. He was a nationally recognized authority on Benjamin Rush and the senior editor of an annotated edition of Rush's *Lectures on the Mind*. Ted personified the university professor who got joy from teaching and a very personal pleasure from the accomplishments of his students and the colleagues whom he helped.

The seal and motto of our medical center hospital embody the theme of the Good Samaritan. Eric T. Carlson's life exemplified that philosophy. Simply put, Ted's existence has made a real difference. He was our friend, teacher, neighbor, colleague and, for many of us, he was and will be a continuing inspiration to go and do likewise.

Dr. Doris Nagel

Twenty-five years ago a small group of first-year psychiatry residents, I among them, gathered with Dr. Diethelm for a tour of the Oskar Diethelm Historical Library as part of our orientation to the Payne Whitney Psychiatric Clinic. Knowing the importance of historical knowledge for the education of psychiatrists, our Professor Emeritus had been assembling antique books and manuscripts relevant to the field from the time he became Chairman of the Department of Psychiatry and Director of the Clinic in 1936. The attractive wood-lined library, looking much as it does now, was built in 1953 and named after Dr. Diethelm on his retirement in 1962, four years before my first acquaintance with him and the History of Psychiatry Section. I don't recall my first meeting with Dr. Eric Carlson, but it must have been then or not long afterwards as I began attending his history seminars. It was through Dr. Carlson's encouragement that I presented a paper to the seminar while still a resident and a few years later became a regular member of the Section. Over the years he was there for us, wisely guiding the life of the Section, selflessly keeping everyone else's interests in mind as much as his own from day to day.

The History Section was about eight years old when I encountered it. In 1958 Dr. Carlson, with Norman Dain (then a graduate student at Columbia University) had received a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health to pursue research in early American psychiatry. This work complemented Dr. Diethelm's projects, with which it formed the solid nucleus of a research unit possessing its own excellent historical materials. At the same time Dr. Diethelm established a half-time Directorship for the History Section, the only position of its kind in any American medical college, then or now; and Dr. Carlson was appointed to it. Having graduated from Cornell Medical College in 1950 and married his wife Jean in the same year, and finished his Payne Whitney residency in 1955, in the year his daughter was born, he remained a loyal Cornellian, leading a close-knit happy family life just across the street from the hospital.

For thirty-four years Dr. Carlson devoted himself to the History Section, working side by side with Dr. Diethelm who continued after his retirement, until very recently, to pursue research and collect books. Dr. Carlson advanced the Section's activities and collections tremendously, adding to the Historical Library year by year, building up the contemporary Historical Reference Library, arranging the working seminars that became a bi-weekly interdisciplinary ferment, founding the Friends in 1964 when he wrote the first of his informative and entertaining Annual Reports, inaugurating the Archives Collection in 1976, teaching medical students and residents, and raising funds for fellowships or for the collections. While maintaining an active clinical practice, he worked on his many research and editorial projects, published papers, completed the drafts of two books (which

we hope to see published), and participated effectively in organizations and committees inside and beyond the Cornell community. And he always graciously received and strongly supported the researchers, whose numbers grew as the Section became well known in the larger world.

Ted Carlson's unusually democratic and cordial style fostered the quest of any person, regardless of credentials, who took a sincere interest in probing the history of psychiatry. He took you seriously, knew where to locate what you needed and would drop everything to fetch it for you. Frequent notes would appear in your mailbox, written in his small clear hand, attached to a reprint he thought might interest you, citing a book or article related to your topic, or mentioning a useful lead. His tall kindly presence was never intrusive; he helped you follow your own inclinations and made no demands. His equanimity created a calm atmosphere for study. When others assisted him, he showed warm appreciation.

Dr. Carlson imbued every task in the Section with dignity and meaning. Short of help, he cheerfully stood in as amateur librarian, as furniture-mover, decorator, housekeeper. He would scavenge extra bookcases to receive new acquisitions and provide special treats for the gatherings after the seminars. My most immediate memories of Dr. Carlson place him amidst a profusion of books: cradling a stack in his arms, facing long rows on the conference table, confronting a pile among the papers on his desk, wheeling a full book cart between various stacks and libraries within the clinic, passing some prize volumes around the table at seminars. They were his element. He was perpetually tracking them down, packing and unpacking, sorting, perusing, cataloguing, arranging, or shelving, as well as continuing his specialized studies with them.

We in the Department who have known and loved him and who, after this sudden cruel loss, must continue on without him, can only keep his spirit alive by building, as he did, resources and activities to keep pace with the widening interest, and by perpetuating his generosity towards those who will advance our perspective on present and future by discovering how our professional ancestors thought, theorized, and interacted with the people placed in their care whom they were trying to heal.

Dr. Lawrence Friedman

As the History Section grew, one of my favorite amusements was watching newcomers and visitors discover Ted. After the usual comments about how no other institution had an atmosphere like ours, they would predictably talk about how impressed they were by Dr. Carlson. I think it was his combination of dignity and warmth, his erudition and unconditional helpfulness, his youthful, open curiosity, and his egalitarian respect for the minds and interests of others, whatever their age or experience. In a man of such standards, the predisposition to respect his visitor had an unfailing effect.

Those of us who had the good fortune to work with him enjoyed his reassuring serenity, his great gentleness, his quiet, sometimes mischievous, always-good-natured humor. And then there was his special brand of considerateness. It was a considerateness that was careful and non-intrusive but consistent and accurate. I have never encountered anything quite like it. Ted's company was always a good place to repair to, and one always left feeling better for the meeting.

He didn't flaunt his many passions; over the years we would keep discovering still another one in casual conversation. But he was unmistakably dedicated. You would catch his pride in his family. And you could see in him the dedication of the genuine scientist. He was a scientist of the story-book kind, who works without fanfare or self advertisement, without an axe to grind, giving all possibilities a fair hearing and following the trail wherever it led. His tenacious scholarship set a standard of integrity and discipline that put our usual, hastier and more contentious practices to shame. He was patient in the pursuit of his goals, vigorously researching two or three projects over many years. I don't know how he kept them all in his head, but then, he was able to keep more in his head than seemed humanly possible. And, without stifling his cultural interests or his knowledgeable love of nature, he steadfastly pursued his research, sometimes making use of travel time to Connecticut to type in the car while Jean was driving -- a feat I envied and would not have thought possible.

He needed that resourcefulness because in the Section he put himself completely at the disposal of his students and colleagues. I have always felt privileged that my life's scenery had in it this rare model of the scholar-administrator, a real-life Weberian Ideal Type. A learned man of great modesty, he had more good will and less available rancor than any one I know. But his gentle nature was joined to a strong personality from whom one could count on fairness and wise judgement and a readiness to take on any onus that responsibility carried. He had a much more open mind than others; he gathered opinions with much less pre-judgment. But when a decision needed making, or a rule enforcing, it was done easily and with quiet confidence. Not that every directorial act was a pleasure for him. He was not a drummer type, and an emblem of his devotion was his willingness to act out of character in order to secure the Section's welfare. I admired him -- and, again envied him -- for that willingness and ability. And I must add that, although he always offered the most sympathetic ear and supportive attitude as soon as he sensed unhappiness in others, he never indulged in the slightest grumble of his own. That made him a center of peacefulness and security for the rest of us.

He inspired uncommon loyalty and channelled it into the common work. Devotion to the Section and devotion to Ted were the same thing. And this despite -- or because -- one never felt any pressure from him. He was

not a pusher. He was a drawer-outer, a fosterer, a builder-upper. One never performed the simplest, obligatory duty without receiving a particularly observant appreciation from Ted, often in his characteristically graceful and disciplined handwriting. In the History Section not a sparrow fell -- or even hopped around a bit -- that Ted didn't know and respond. He never took our slightest effort for granted. And he didn't forget any scholarly need; he was always on the lookout for useful materials for our own projects. If I casually mentioned one year that I was missing the middle volume of Jones' Freud Trilogy, he would remember it years later when he had an opportunity to get it for me.

Having enjoyed this good, gifted, giving man in our lives we will not be able to stop sharing our experiences with him in our minds.

Dr. Gerard P. Smith

Director, Bourne Laboratory, Westchester Division

Shortly after I joined the department in 1968 I began to attend some of the seminars in the History Section. I went to these seminars hoping to learn something. I was not disappointed. I was quite surprised by how welcoming Ted Carlson was to me. When my attendance at the seminars flagged Ted would gently nudge me about this, telling me how much he missed seeing me there. When I finally presented a seminar of my own last year, Ted's comments were helpful and encouraging. He offered to help me prepare the presentation for publication. Thus in the context of the History Section I was impressed by Ted's generosity, tact, and encouragement qualities that other people who preceded me in speaking have already remarked on.

I saw another side to Ted when I worked with him on the Appointments and Promotions Committee of this department. The work of that committee is quite difficult because it requires the members to pass judgements on their peers and sometimes on their students. The process of judgement is complicated because it requires weighing the relative value of strengths, weaknesses, and future potential. Discussions can be heated. Misunderstandings can occur. In the midst of these difficulties and distractions Ted never lost his composure. He was a great advocate for the people he was assigned to review, emphasizing their strengths and trying to put their weaknesses in perspective. Being a scholar of international reputation his standards were very high. Being a human being of considerable insight and empathy he tried to show how individuals could meet those high standards in their own idiosyncratic way. We have a word for this in English and it is called wisdom. Wisdom cannot be learned and it cannot be taught. Wisdom is the residue of experience defined by high thought and deep compassion. Since wisdom is always in short supply, the loss of Ted's wisdom diminishes this department, and all of us who work in it.

Dr. Nathan Kravis

I think what I shall miss most is no longer having the opportunity to share with Ted the excitement of doing historical research, the quiet thrill of hunting and acquiring old books, swapping ideas and suggestions about whatever research each of us was pursuing at the moment.

When in June, 1990 Ted honored me by asking me to take over the History Section's proud research seminar -- now in its thirtieth year and recently described in the London-based journal *History of Psychiatry* as a seminar *unique on this continent* -- I had first wondered how I would be able to entice the top researchers in the field to come, in some cases from out of town (and in many cases from out of the country) to speak at our seminar without having any money to offer them by way of honorarium or even travel stipend. They came. And they continue to come. I think that is a living tribute to Ted and to what he created here at Cornell.

I was surprised at how easy it was with Ted to make the transition from trainee and student to colleague and friend. There was nothing awkward about it. Ted made it so natural by showing how delighted he was to welcome "new blood" (as he called it) into the life of the History Section.

I remember how one tranquil afternoon, in a playful nod towards youth and modernity, Ted shattered the studious silence of the history reference library by suddenly blaring rock-'n-roll music from his impossibly old radio. It was a moment rich in incongruity.

To those of you here today who are less familiar with what goes on up in the headquarters of the History Section in room P-900, I now freely confess that we do sometimes revel in incongruity, though usually in quieter, more inward ways. For me, it will be in moments like those, when I am alone and absorbed in the world of history, taking private pleasure in certain incongruities, that I'll think of Ted, and the world he helped open up to me, and his unflagging support and nurturance of my interests and pursuits -- and in those moments especially I'll miss him dearly.

Ms. Karen Carlson Confino

I've always considered myself very lucky to have inherited the father that I did.

When you are young you always think you have the greatest father in the world... I still think so. Imagine a parent who had the answer to every question a child may have -- even after that child has become an adult. On those rare occasions when he did not know the answer he would pull out a book and give me a thorough explanation, even though I had already gone on to something totally different.

I do not think there is a limit to the patience my father had, and I tested this at many times. It was amazing to have a dad who never raised his

voice to get his point across. I always admired how he would make his opinion understood without many words. He led by example. And his approach really worked! He showed me that you don't have to raise your voice or argue endlessly in order convey your opinion.

I have an image of my father hovering over his typewriter surrounded by papers and books. It may have looked like work but he was clearly happy. He loved puttering with his antique phonographs, searching antiques shows or garage sales for more typewriters and more phonographs. I have many wonderful memories of my time with him. He taught me how to fish, how to drive, both things taking a lot of patience, especially with a young girl. He always led me to believe that I could do or achieve anything that I wanted to.

My dad clearly loved my mom with the same intensity that he had forty-plus years ago. He still had a sparkle in his eye when it came to her. He loved to make her happy. They easily convinced me that all marriages should be like theirs, full of love and happiness and enjoyment of each other.

I'm happy to know that my father lived his life to its fullest. He didn't put off happiness for some later date. Selfishly I wish he could be with us much longer but I am thankful that he died without suffering and I am sure without any regrets.